

## **Analysis of Compositions Written by a Chinese Child in Japan**

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### **Abstract**

This discourse analysis focuses on the Chinese and Japanese writing of a young student living in Japan who is ethnically Chinese and multilingual. A method for analyzing linguistically diverse student writing was used to explore the literary elements and heteroglossic voices in this student's writing. Such analysis has been shown to be beneficial to teachers for understanding linguistically diverse student writers. The findings were triangulated with observational data from the student's home and school, an interview with the student's teacher and interviews with the mother, who is the co-author of this study. The analysis revealed evidence of writing strengths in two languages, including flexible bilingualism and agency. Implications for school curriculum that develops student languages as a resource for learning are explored.

**Keywords:** multilingual; writing; children; discourse analysis; translanguaging; flexible bilingualism; agency

## **Introduction**

Multiple languages are prevalent in our increasingly connected world, and this interconnectivity brings languages together in contact zones (Pratt, 1991) where speakers of multiple languages interact with one another. Schools are a common contact zone, yet while most educators are comfortable with the dominant language of instruction, they need tools for understanding multilingualism (Piccardo, 2013). Discourse analysis can shed light on how children develop multilingual competency, providing much needed information to educators, especially at the elementary school level.

## **Literature Review**

### **Discourse Analysis of Student Writing**

Discourse analysis in literacy research most often involves analyzing transcripts of oral discourse in order to understand how the literacy education of all students can be accomplished (Rex, et al., 2010). The present study however, analyzes multilingual student-generated writing. A socially situated perspective on student writing undergirds this study (Mercer, 2004; Lemke, 1995; Street, 1995). In this view, writing is understood as constructed within a cultural context, embedded in activity (Lave & Wenger, 1990). It is productive to analyze student writing from a socially situated perspective because students draw upon authentic experiences as they construct the written text. Discourse analysis can be used to reveal aspects of student experiences that informed their writing. Studies that use discourse analysis with multilingual writing are few, however we review several such studies in this emerging area of scholarship. The following studies reveal how multilingual students draw upon their linguistic resources as they write for a variety of purposes.

Harman and Varga-Dobai (2012) used a critical socio-cultural approach to discourse analysis to explore writing within an arts-based participatory education experience of middle school (ages 10-13) multilingual students in the United States. The students chose to write about issues of discrimination in their community and created a newsletter to publicize these issues. The young people exercised agency by using all their linguistic resources, choosing their topic, and disseminating information to others. The study illustrated how discourse analysis of children's writing can reveal issues that are important to students as well as actions students take to create better conditions in their lives and the lives of others. Discourse analysis can also be used to understand how writing styles interact among cultures. Curdt-Christiansen (2006) analyzed the writing of a nine year old Chinese heritage language learner in Canada. The analysis revealed direct quotes, which the student used in a culturally appropriate manner. Although the practice of quoting famous writers and poets in Chinese writing can be seen as reliance on authoritative discourse, Curdt-Christianson discussed how authoritative discourse co-existed with internally persuasive discourse. This process combines the literacy practices of multiple cultures to create written works that express the writer's identity. This process is highlighted in translanguaging theory (García & Wei, 2014), which encourages students to draw upon multiple language practices in their writing. This theory posits that multiple languages are part of an integrated system, and speakers move between languages as needed during a speech event as well as in writing. Canagarajah (2011) described how one college student strategically used her home language to compose an English essay that included Arabic words and phrases. The student foregrounded communication above correctness while writing an essay that deviated from the expected form.

Students not only use multiple languages, but also rely on multiple media in crafting texts. Lam (2000) described a Japanese high school English learner who designed a webpage melding extracts from magazines, music, celebrities, and other websites. The webpage allowed the student to connect with an international audience as he adjusted to life in a new culture. The present study builds upon these previous studies by using a discourse analysis method uniquely suited to discovering the resources students draw upon in their writing including languages, the words of others, media, and concerns that lead to agency. This study situates the multilingual student within a social world in which multilingualism is an asset.

### **Multilingualism is an Asset for Learning**

It is important for educators to understand why multilingualism is an asset. “Bilinguals have an expanded repertoire with which to amplify communication and express comprehension. These resources have the potential to be both communicative tools and pedagogical tools” (Hopewell, 2013, p. 235). This stance is in opposition to educators who believe that multiple languages interfere with one another or that children should use only one language in order to increase the speed of language acquisition (Schwartz & Soifer, 2012). In the US, the state of Arizona mandated English-only instruction for English learners. However, Jiménez-Castellanos, Blanchard, Atwill and Jiménez-Silva (2014) found that when children studied in the English-only model, less than half met age or grade level performance. Ignoring students’ multiple languages does not benefit their learning.

The advantages of learning and using multiple languages are many. Some multilingual students use their languages to help their families understand school, medical, and other official documents and to negotiate parent-teacher conferences. Although such language brokering has its problems, some families rely on it for everyday life (Corona, et al., 2011). Another advantage for multilingual students is in learning world languages for academic purposes (Hernández-León & Lakhani, 2013) and students’ multiple languages may also eventually provide employment opportunities (Kondo, 1999). Additionally, multilingualism is an asset for cognitive development. Neuroscientists have discovered cognitive benefits to bilingualism such as enhanced performance of the attentional system (Costa, Hernández & Sebastián-Gallés, 2008). Multilingualism can be an asset to learning. Canagarajah (2011) illustrated how using a dialogic approach to instruction develops students’ linguistic resources in order to create texts in which two languages are complimentary. While writing, students draw upon their languages to make rhetorical choices. Indeed, even people who view themselves as monolingual use other languages in writing. For example, English authors often use French, German, Spanish, and Latin to illustrate their meaning.

There are benefits to writing in multiple languages, just as there are benefits to speaking multiple languages (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Riley, 2015). For example, early oral language abilities are a resource that can lead to accomplished readers and writers when sufficient educational contexts are employed. Taylor, Bernhard, Garg and Cummins (2008) depicted such a learning context in a Canadian kindergarten where children wrote dual language books in collaboration with the classroom teacher and multiple generations of family members in the child’s home. Educators are increasingly utilizing students’ multiple languages for writing instruction (Fu, 2009), therefore, it is necessary to analyze such writing to understand the rhetorical strategies used. Building on previous work using discourse analysis with multilingual writing, our paper traces the linguistic moves made by a multilingual child when writing in two languages, Japanese and Chinese. Writing samples from her third, fourth, and fifth grade school years were chosen for analysis in order to explore how she was developing as a multilingual writer. Theories of translanguaging and multilingualism

contributed to our exploration of the following question: What can be learned through analyzing a bilingual Chinese/Japanese student's writing in both languages?

## Method

### A Discourse Analysis Method for Student Writing

Spence (2014) developed a method for analyzing linguistically diverse student writing called *Generous Reading*. In a study of 61 fifth grade students and their teachers (Spence, Fan, Speece, and Bushaala, forthcoming) it was found that when teachers used this method in a professional development setting, the teachers made more nuanced observations than a control group of teachers. The Generous Reading teachers drew from broader sources of knowledge about student writing. They noticed how their students used description, explanation, concepts, and expression contrasted with the control group, which took very little or no notice of these and continued to utilize a skills discourse of writing instruction.

Generous Reading draws from composition scholars and childhood educators who have analyzed student writing for contributing voices, or influences (Bakhtin, 1986; Dyson, 2003; Freedman & Ball, 2004; Halasek, 1999; Ryan & Barton, 2014; Welch, 1993) and for literary or descriptive language (Armstrong, 2006; Coady and Escamilla, 2005). Bakhtin referred to language as a heteroglossia, or diversity of voices. Analysis of voices "explicitly bridges the linguistic and the sociohistorical, enriching analysis of human interaction" (Bailey, 200, p. 269). Such an analysis helps uncover the historical and social influences in writing. Heteroglossic voices and literary language are internalized ways of using language, not authorial embellishments to writing. "The generalizations governing poetic metaphorical expressions are not in language, but in thought" (Lakoff, 1992, p. 203). Literary elements such as figures of speech used in everyday language can be analyzed to reveal the thought process behind that language.

Discourse analysis focusing on voices and literary language provided a framework for analyzing the writing of one child, Lala. First, we read one written work to get an overall understanding. Then we read it again, sentence by sentence, looking for voices of others in the writing. These voices could be from Chinese or Japanese literary tradition, phrases the family used at home, videos, or school events, for example. Next, we read the piece a third time looking for literary language for example, metaphors, symbols, repetition, alliteration and rhyme. Finally, we discussed what this analysis revealed about the child as a person and as a writer. We analyzed each of three pieces of one child's writing in this way, taking notes on the Generous Reading form (Table 1).

### Data Collection

In the present study, the researchers collected all Lala's writing over a three year time span when she was 9, 10, and 11 years old. We chose a representative written work from each of these years. In addition to visiting Lala's school and interviewing one of her teachers, Spence engaged in four research visits to Lala's home. Observational notes were recorded at Lala's school and her home. Second author, Yang Tao is Lala's mother, a college-level teacher of English language who provided insights into Lala's early childhood and family life through several interviews. Yang Tao analyzed Lala's Japanese and Chinese writings and translated them into English.

Table 1. Generous Reading Form

**Generous Reading**

Student	Date	Grade	Teacher
Genre	Title		
<b>Voices of Others</b>		<b>Literary Elements</b>	
What does this tell you about the person?			
What does this tell you about the writer?			
What does this reveal about the writing?			
What is the student doing especially well that I want to reinforce?			
What can I teach that will help the student grow as a person or as a writer?			
What can I teach that will help improve this piece or future writing?			

## Context

We report on the multilingual writing of an ethnically Chinese elementary student who was born and raised in Japan. Chinese are a significant population group in Japan. As of 2015, the ethnic breakdown of population was Japanese 98.5%, Koreans 0.5%, Chinese 0.4%, other 0.6% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). The researchers and child participant, Lala (pseudonym), became acquainted through a previous study of Japanese writing instruction when Lala was a student at one of the schools where the researchers observed her fourth grade teacher (Spence & Kite, 2013).

## Lala's Early Years

Lala's father and mother are both Chinese and moved to Japan soon after they were married. Lala was born in Japan and began attending Japanese nursery school at nine months. She was immersed in the Japanese language while at nursery school. At home, her mother spoke to her in Mandarin Chinese, English, and Japanese, depending on the situation. Her father spoke to her only in Mandarin Chinese. Thus, Lala was multilingual from infancy. She continued to attend Japanese nursery school until the age of three, when she spent most of her third year in China with her grandmother. There, she attended a Chinese preschool. She came back to Japan at four years old, and continued to attend Japanese schools until the present time. Lala's family lived in the center of a large city in Japan within a predominantly Japanese neighborhood. In general, the family did not interact with a Chinese community, so Lala had little Chinese language input from the local environment. Beginning when Lala was five, her mother taught her about three hundred Chinese written characters using the Chinese national textbook. She continued teaching Chinese characters until Lala was in third grade, when she stopped. She thought Lala might be confusing Japanese *kanji* with Chinese writing, as the two are sometimes subtly different.

## Analysis

We used the Generous Reading method to analyze three written works that were chosen as exemplars of Lala's multilingual writing (see appendix for the original language versions). The Japanese works were chosen as typical writings from third and fifth grade. The Chinese piece was one of only two Chinese writings that Lala completed during third, fourth, and fifth grade. Lala's only encouragement to write in Chinese during these years were through the open exploration notebook and the Chinese speech contest.

Yang Tao was familiar with the Generous Reading method. Thinking about the voices and literary elements in the writing, she read through each written work, while verbally translating into English for Spence. Together we discussed the heteroglossic voices within the written work, followed by a discussion of the literary elements. Finally, we discussed what this analysis revealed about Lala as a person, and as a writer. As this occurred, Lala played with her brother nearby, therefore, we could ask Lala to clarify aspects of the written work throughout the analysis and discussion.

Although we found many voices and literary elements in each piece of writing, we focus on those which suggest a pattern in how Lala was developing as a person and as a writer. For each piece of writing, we present contextual information and an English translation of each piece of writing, followed by our findings from the discourse analysis. The names of places and people are pseudonyms.

## Findings

### Japanese *Nikki* Entry

The first Japanese text we analyzed was written when Lala was in third grade. Her teacher asked the class to write on Monday about something they did on the weekend. The students wrote in a *nikki* (journal) and the teacher subsequently read the entries and commented in red pen, focusing on the content of the writing. *Nikki* is a common type of writing practiced in Japanese elementary schools. Lala's teacher required writing in the *nikki* every week. She also assigned writing during language arts lessons and across school subjects. The teacher provided the students with a notebook to explore topics of their own choice at home. Lala used this notebook extensively during her third grade year, and even used the notebook to engage in a self-study of Chinese. One Japanese *nikki* entry was analyzed for this study.

#### *Takihotobashiru* Park

Yesterday, because of good weather, we went to *Takihotobashiru*. We always go there by car but yesterday I asked my father, "Let's go there by bicycle."

And then my father said, "Okay." And I felt happy. We rode bicycles to the park.

I felt like only a few minutes later, my brother said, "Hey, look, *Takihotobashiru* is over there. Look, look." he said.

Really, it's true. We realized we arrived already. So we went to Children's Square. We tried our best to play. First of all, I played on the monkey bars. My brother worked very hard on it at that time and I said, "You can do it."

But my brother fell down from the monkey bars repeatedly, with one more to go. Only one more! So he cried very loudly. At that time I went to his side and said, "Are you okay? I'm sure you can do it!" I comforted him.

So with my words, my brother stopped crying. He said, "Okay, I'll try to pass the bars again, so please, my sister, watch me. Focus on me only, please." he requested.

So once again he started from the very beginning and went to the very end. He finished it, he did it! "Great," I said, "you worked so hard, congratulations."

My brother smiled. "Thank you" he said. That was fun for me, so I would like to go there again.

The heteroglossic voices and the literary language found in this piece of writing illustrate how Lala explored the power of words. The heteroglossic voices were cultural maxims, direct quotes of the father and brother, and dialogue typical of children's talk to each other. The literary elements were repetition, comparisons and theme development. These aspects of Lala's narrative initiated and sustained a theme: the power of words. For example, the dialogue between Lala and her father began with "We always go there by car but yesterday I asked my father, 'Let's go there by bicycle.'" Her father agreed, the first instance of Lala using the power of words to influence others.

Lala also used common Japanese maxims such as *ganbare*, "you can do it!" that indicate the belief that encouragement is important and can lead to success. This idea was reinforced by Lala's use of the phrase *ishokenme*, "do as well as you can." The idea that one can succeed



through trying hard was reinforced in the narrative through repetition, “I’ll try to pass the bars again” and “So once again he started” The dialogue between brother and sister continued the theme of the power of words as Lala’s words of encouragement had the effect of her brother successfully completing the monkey bars. Lala directly addressed the theme by writing, “So with my words, my brother stopped crying.” Lala expressed the power of words to comfort, motivate, and create a successful outcome.

Lala also expressed agency by helping her brother to achieve a goal. This agency was directed toward the betterment of the family unit. This narrative revealed Lala as an agent in encouraging physical activity for her family. First, she encouraged her father to allow the family to bicycle to the park, rather than take the car. Second, she encouraged her brother to achieve an athletic goal of completing the monkey bars. Lala’s actions resulted in increased physical activity for the whole family.

### **Chinese Speech**

The next written work we present is the Chinese speech, written in fourth grade for a speech contest. The contest officials provided the topic, which was to write about a future goal or dream. The Chinese speech contest was held in a nearby city with a substantial Chinese population. Lala wrote the speech mainly in Chinese, using Japanese when she did not know how to express an idea in Chinese. Once she had written a draft of the speech, she asked her mother for suggestions of how to express the Japanese words and phrases in Chinese. She used her mother’s suggestions to rewrite the speech completely in Chinese. Then she continued to revise the speech until she had a final copy to be used in the speech contest.

#### **What is Your Dream?**

I want to be a person who is helpful to people who need help and to protect the earth. Even though I am still in elementary school, I can do two things. The first one, I can deposit my pocket money so I can do something. Every day I help my mom do some housework, washing dishes, cleaning house, watching my brother. My mom gives me 400 *yen* a month and I deposit this money and I never spend it at all. In Szechuan province there was an earthquake and also in Japan. My family and I donated money a little bit. One day a TV program introduced a place in Thailand where there was a flood. Every day it flooded and the school floated away. Money was donated for a floating school and the teachers taught in the floating school. That inspired me.

The second one, it is very important to separate trash in Japan. It is important to protect the environment. Separating garbage is a very good idea to protect the environment. It can decrease the pollution in the air and save the environment. Unfortunately Chinese people do not do very well on this point. I would like to tell my friends, my relatives, my family members about pollution and teach them how to separate garbage. In my opinion separating garbage is a good idea. What’s more I think carbon dioxide will pollute the environment very much, so I always persuade my father not to drive. If we can take a bus or take a train, I don’t want my father to take a car.

What’s more I decided not to eat potato chips. Potato chips are really delicious, but it needs a lot of palm oil. In order to make potato chips, a lot of forests are cut down to instead grow palms for oil. The earth’s environment has been destroyed and a lot of animals have lost their homes. This I remember from a good book. So I decided not to eat potato chips but it is something I can do to protect the environment. So my

conclusion is, my dream is to be a person who is helpful to other people in the society and I want to realize my dream bit by bit.

The heteroglossic voices and the literary language found in this piece of writing illustrate how Lala explored helping others in society. The heteroglossic voices in this speech were: television broadcasts of the Szechuan and Fukushima earthquakes and Thailand flood, people who came from Fukushima to the school, environmental slogans in Japanese lessons, books, pamphlets, and posters from the train station. The literary language was reminiscent of proverbs.

The speech had an obvious theme due to the nature of the writing prompt for a future goal or dream. Lala's dream was to help others in society. Lala developed this theme through texts she encountered, including television, posters, books, and pamphlets. Although the family does not usually watch television, the media had a strong influence on the speech. The natural disasters and resulting nuclear power plant accident at Fukushima had a devastating effect across Japan. Everyone was affected in some way. News broadcasts were shown at Lala's elementary school and in the aftermath of the disaster, people from Fukushima came to the school to speak. That same year, Thailand was devastated by their worst flooding in five decades and as a result many people were left homeless and many buildings were destroyed.

Lala directly referred to television broadcasts in her speech, "One day a TV program introduced a place in Thailand where there was a flood." Lala also directly referred to a book about habitat destruction in the rainforest, "The earth's environment has been destroyed and a lot of animals have lost their homes. This I remember from a good book." Lala's writing was also influenced by community pamphlets with detailed instructions on how to separate household trash for recycling; "Separating garbage is a very good idea to protect the environment." These influential voices in Lala's world reflected her growing awareness of her place in the world and society.

Lala felt that she could make a small difference in the world, but that small gestures by many people can have a large impact. The phrase, "bit by bit" is reminiscent of proverbs from China and other cultures that mean something like, "A single drop of water helps to swell the ocean." Lala's speech is a series of small actions that when combined with the actions of other people around the world, can have a larger impact.

The speech shares a message from the previously analyzed narrative. In both, Lala told her father not to drive the car. In the speech, she directly states that driving causes carbon dioxide emissions, which pollute the air. By analyzing Lala's writing across time, a clear picture of her interests and concerns begins to emerge. In the speech, she told her family in China that they should recycle their trash. This shows that Lala continued to take action for the betterment of the planet. She tries to make an impact on her immediate family in Japan and on her extended family in China. Her writing reveals her as a responsible world citizen.

### **Japanese Impression**

The last work we will present was written in Japanese when Lala was in fifth grade. In this narrative, Lala described a school activity in which team members worked together to read a map to find their way to each teacher, who then gave them a quiz that they must answer in order to move on to finding the next teacher. It is an impression written after a school activity. The school she attended was small, so all the grade levels engaged in outdoor activities together and the school principal promoted the practice of writing impressions about such activities. Her fifth grade teacher required impression writing only infrequently, and he did not require the students to write as often as Lala had in third and fourth grade. Also, Lala began attending *juku*,

after-school lessons in math, language arts, and science. So she did not have much time to write at home for her own purposes as she had in third grade. Lala's body of written work in fifth grade was much smaller than in the previous years.

### Enjoyable, Exciting Picnic

On May sixteenth, we had an exciting picnic. We went and came back on foot, so our legs became more and more heavy. At first we tried to reach the goal as fast as we could so we chose a short cut and arrived at Ms. Nomura's place. But from there we became more and more lost. So we took out the map and had a look and went back to the place of Ms. Nomura.

From there we were able to find the other teachers. After answering the quiz from Mr. Yamada, homeroom teacher of second grade, about ten meters from him, we saw a first year girl fall down on the ground. Her legs were bleeding. The leader said, "Can I carry you?"

She said, "No." So listening to her words I felt how stubborn she was as a first year girl. But I saw the blood came out of her mouth more and more, and her steps became weaker.

So the leader said again, "Can I carry you on my back?" But the girl seemed she didn't want to be carried. Her arms and legs were wobbly and it was hard for her to jump on the back to be carried.

I was called because I had a brother and was used to carrying my brother, so I immediately carried her to the place of Ms. Kimura then to the main office for treatment for her injuries. Although it had many troubles, this exciting picnic was fun for me.

The heteroglossic voices and the literary language found in this piece of writing illustrate how Lala explored overcoming obstacles and solving problems in her social world. The heteroglossic voices in this writing were an English loan word and Japanese maxims. The literary language included repetition, alliteration, and opposites. Lala used the word *goru*, goal, an English loan word. This word was spelled with the alphabet used for foreign words and can be found in sporting events and games. The repetition and alliteration in words such as *waku waku*, exciting, *don don*, more and more, and *chikamichi*, short cut, have the effect of recreating the children's sense of urgency as they read the map and rushed to each goal. Lala also used binary opposites, *tsuyoi* and *yowai*, to describe the first-year girl's strong mind and her weak legs. This narrative ends with another opposite pair, "Although it had many troubles, this exciting picnic was fun for me." The contrast between "many troubles" and "fun" suggests that for Lala, overcoming obstacles is what makes an event worthwhile and enjoyable. Lala showed agency by solving the problems of becoming lost and finding a hurt child and helped her team toward a social purpose within the school setting.

This narrative connects with themes in the previous two pieces of writing. In all three, Lala was concerned with helping others. In all three, Lala showed agency through her interventions and her words. In the *nikki* writing, Lala helped her family to be more physically active, avoid causing air pollution, and she helped her brother achieve a goal. In the speech, Lala encouraged her father and grandparents to avoid causing pollution and took action to help others by saving her money to donate to disaster victims. In the final narrative, she took action to help her team and to help a little girl who was hurt. The three pieces of writing, from three consecutive years show that Lala was developing into a caring, concerned citizen. Lala ultimately used writing

to achieve a social purpose and influence a wider audience when her Chinese speech was published in a newspaper.

The three pieces of writing also show us how Lala was developing as a writer. Lala drew upon resources to write, such as proverbs, books, news reports, and people. She internalized aspects of Japanese language that helped her compose, such as using alliteration to stress action, and using repetition for emphasis. She discussed her writing with her mother in both Chinese and Japanese in order to write in Chinese, using flexible bilingualism to accomplish writing tasks in each of her languages.

### **Discussion**

The analysis of Lala's three compositions revealed aspects of agency and flexible bilingualism. In this discussion, we connect previous work on agency and flexible bilingualism with the current study.

#### **Agency**

Looking across the three written works over a time span of three years, it is clear that Lala continued to address themes that were important to her. When she was confronted with obstacles in life, she relished overcoming the obstacles. It is also evident that Lala demonstrated agency in nurturing the actions of others such as her brother, her father, and her peers. When her brother could not succeed at the monkey bars, she comforted and motivated him until he was successful, demonstrating the power of words. When her group became lost during a school activity and they found a hurt child, Lala expressed agency in solving the problems. Lala also extended her agency to problems in society such as natural disasters and environmental issues. She expressed agency by asking her father not to drive the car, and by asking her grandparents in China to recycle items from their trash. Lala made the decision to not eat potato chips in order to help prevent deforestation. As Lala learned about problems in the world, she responded as a responsible world citizen. Lala's writing was strong because of her sense of agency. She understood that words have power and actions can make a difference.

Previous research on multilingual writing has shown how children use multiple languages in identity development and agency. Kabuto (2012) described how young children used English and Japanese scripts in identity formation when writing at home. Maguire and Grave's, (2001) analysis of bilingual students' daily journal entries revealed children's views of the world and their sense of selves as writers. Multilingual children must develop an identity that includes multiple languages and cultures. Writing teachers can facilitate identity development through providing opportunities for children to draw upon all their linguistic resources. Teachers can encourage writing at home or in school using journals, or open exploration notebooks. Parents can be encouraged to provide materials and opportunities for children to write at home and in multiple languages.

Harman and Varga Dobai's (2012) study provided the opportunity to write about social topics that were meaningful to the students. They expressed agency by researching, revising, and disseminating information on discriminatory practices. Multilingual students have real concerns about social issues. They may experience discrimination or bias in their social life both inside and outside school. They are often globally aware, due to familial ties to multiple countries. Teachers can learn about students concerns through analysis of their journal writing and explore some of their concerns within the school curriculum. Japanese approved textbooks contain examples of social issues such as the large amount of trash discarded each day in Japan,

and the declining physical activity of Japanese children (Sanseido, 2015). Children's own concerns can be connected to the curriculum through exploratory writing.

This study adds to the literature exploring discourse analysis of student generated writing. Such analysis reveals the complexity, identity development, and social concerns embedded in written works. Lala's three writings reveal how she was developing her identity and agency as a helpful, encouraging person, who cares about the environment. She was not afraid to express her views to others and encourage others to act in accordance with her views in order to improve the environment and improve society.

### **Flexible Bilingualism and Translanguaging**

Flexible bilingualism and translanguaging were used by Lala and her mother. Flexible bilingualism was used as a strategy within the process of writing and resulted in a persuasive speech for a contest. Such bilingual strategies have also been found in classrooms. Flexible bilingualism has been used by teachers to link the social, cultural, community, and linguistic domains of student's lives (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). The multiple languages in such classrooms overlap languages, rather than artificially separating them. Multilingual students engage in literacy practices using various languages outside of school. Although school literacy practices are of consequence for developing academic identities, non-school settings are equally important in the overall development of students' identities (Haneda, 2006).

Lala and her mother moved fluidly between Japanese and Chinese in the co-creation of the speech. First, Lala wrote a draft of the speech using as much Chinese language as she could on her own. She used Japanese words and phrases when she did not know how to express the idea in Chinese. Then Lala asked her mother for help in thinking of Chinese phrases. Through this interaction, the mother-daughter pair engaged in flexible bilingualism, in which the boundaries between the languages were permeable (Creese and Blackledge, 2010). By discussing the ideas in both languages, Lala developed concepts that could be described in both Japanese and Chinese.

Lala and her mother used translanguaging, drawing upon multiple languages to communicate (Canagarajah, 2013; Garcia and Wei, 2013). Moving between languages was the usual method of communication for Lala's family. Spence observed Lala's family engaging in translanguaging in informal dialogue in their home during each of the four research visits. For Lala's family, translanguaging was a natural way to communicate. This was clearly beneficial to Lala as she developed as a writer of Chinese and Japanese. Yet, this strength was seldom drawn upon in Lala's school life.

Lala is now in sixth grade and to date, has only once been asked by her teachers to use Chinese in school. At that time, the class was studying classical Chinese poetry, written in Japanese. This is a conventional unit of study in Japanese elementary school. However, in this case the teacher asked Lala to read a poem with original Chinese pronunciation for the whole class to hear. Lala was a bit shy, but performed the reading to the best of her ability. Multilingual students have linguistic abilities that can be valuable assets for their own learning and to share with others. These assets should not be ignored by educators. Although there are ethnic schools in Japan (Japanese-Chinese, or Japanese-Chinese-English), they are not protected under the Japanese Education Law Act (Sakamoto, 2012). Hence, Japan does not currently place value on developing children's languages other than Japanese and English. This study adds to the argument for valuing multilingual educational practices, such as incorporating flexible bilingualism into writing instruction.

Early language experiences are important in developing multilingual literacy. Lala's Chinese writing highlights a combination of experiences that led to multilingual literacy. These experiences were: early learning of Chinese literacy, continued exposure to Chinese in a variety of venues, and using translanguaging and flexible bilingualism in order to express ideas in writing. By revising the speech with her mother's help, Lala was successful in writing and performing a polished Chinese version of her speech for the contest. Her speech was also published in a Chinese language newspaper. Early exposure to languages, continuing development of languages and utilizing flexible bilingualism are valuable practices that educators might draw upon in crafting curriculum and policy.

### **Implications**

Discourse analysis using Generous Reading is one way to analyze student writing, revealing who students are becoming as people in relation to society. Through her writing, Lala is seen as a person who thrives on solving problems and helping others in difficult situations. This can be seen in her simple narratives of family and school life, as well as the speech she wrote to express her dreams for the future. Often educators do not look beyond surface features of writing such as spelling, handwriting, grammar, and organization. They never see the person behind the writing, even when the words are clearly describing that person's ideas. Educators should take the time to read student writing, thinking about who the student is becoming and what the student is thinking. Discourse analysis can also help educators to see what the student is doing as a writer. By noticing their literary language, educators can see that students have internalized aspects of language such as alliteration and repetition. Students use metaphors, proverbs and symbolism without intentionally trying to embellish their writing. Educators should pay attention to what students are doing with language in their writing. This information also reveals aspects of the student's life such as their interests and concerns.

Parents and family members of multilingual children are tremendous assets in helping educators understand how children are translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013; Garcia and Wei, 2013). When given opportunities, children will use all their linguistic resources to develop themselves as people in society and as writers. Teachers and parents should share student writing and together discuss the child as a person and how the child is using their linguistic repertoire in speaking and writing. Teachers could ask how language is used in the home, and encourage the family to discuss ideas in multiple languages. Homework assignments that include opportunities for translanguaging would be beneficial to students' writing and language development. Pre-service teachers would also benefit from learning how to accomplish a generous reading in order to provide them a better understanding of student writing. Finally, policy makers should consider the benefits of bilingual education opportunities. There is very little opportunity for Mandarin Chinese development in Japan, yet the development of bilingual Chinese can benefit Japanese society, filling a need for translation services and intercultural understandings.

### **Conclusion**

This discourse analysis adds to the research on translanguaging and flexible bilingualism. By exploring one child's Japanese and Chinese writing over three years, we have shown how this child continued to write about themes that expressed her agency as a family member, a member of a school team, and as a responsible citizen. The study also revealed how translanguaging was used in the home setting and in academic writing for a speech contest. The mother and child engaged in flexible bilingualism, stimulating the development of biliteracy. The discourse analysis method uncovered heteroglossic voices and literary elements in writing and provided

insights into the child as a person and as a writer. In future studies, this method could be used to analyze the writing of multilingual students in classroom settings in order to see how writing ability in multiple languages can be developed through flexible bilingualism in the classroom.

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## Appendix

### Lala's third grade Japanese writing

1 1 月 2 6 日 月曜日「三年生」

わたしは、きのう、お天気がよかったのでつるみりよくちに行きました。  
いつもなら、車だけど、わたしがお父さんに、「自てん車で行こうよ。」  
と、いいました。そしたら、お父さんが、  
「いいよ。」と、いってくれてうれしかったです。  
そして自でん車で何分かこいてたら弟が「あ、つるみりよくちがあつたよ。ほらみて。」  
と、いいました。そしたらみんなもきづいて、「ほんまや。」  
といいました。そして、子ども広場にいて、いっしょけんめい遊びました。わたしは、とにかくうんていであそんでいると、前に弟がいっしょけんめいうんていでがんばっていました。わたしは、「がんばれ\_\_。」  
といいました。けれど弟が半分でおちたり、あといっぽんでいけたところをおちらり。とうとうないでしまいました。わたしは、弟のそばにいて、  
「だうじょうぶ。ぜったいいつかできるよ。」  
となぐさめてあげました。そしたらなきやんで、弟が  
「もう一ど、うんていを、がんばるから、おねえちゃん、しっかりみていてね。」  
と、いってくれました。それから一回目、さいしょうからさいごまで弟がいけました。わたしは、「よく、ここまでがんばったね。おめでとう。」  
といいました。弟はえがおになって、「ありがとう。」  
といいました。とても楽しかったです。また行きたいです。

### Lala's Chinese fourth grade writing

我的梦想 李晓（女）10岁 小学四年级 日本大阪

我长大了，想当一个对社会有用的人，帮助那些需要帮助的人，并且全力保护地球环境。

我现在是小学四年级学生，还不能直接去帮助别人，但是我可以做两件事情。第一件事情是我可以积攒一些零花钱，积少成多，就能做一些善事。我每天都帮妈妈做一些家务活儿，

洗碗，叠衣服，收拾屋子，照顾弟弟等等。这样妈妈一个月给我四百日元，我把这些钱都攒起来，从来不乱花。在中国发生大地震时，在日本海啸时，我和家里人都捐过钱。在电视里，我看到一个地方每年都发大水，把学校都冲了。孩子们没有学校，不能学习，非常可怜。我长大了，一定好好工作，攒更多的钱给那些孩子建新的学校。

另外一件事我可以做的是保护地球环境。在日本，把垃圾分类是一个保护环境的好办法。不仅可以减少对大气的污染，还可以节约能源。但可惜的是中国在这方面做的不好。我要告诉我在中国的朋友和亲人，教给他们把垃圾分类处理。另外，汽车尾气会污染环境，所以我经常劝告我爸爸，不让他开车出门。我真想大声呼吁，少开汽车吧！还有，我决定不吃土豆片了。土豆片好吃是好吃，但需要很多很多的椰子油。很多地区为了制造更多的椰子油，砍了大片森林种上油椰子，这样导致了生态被破坏，动物们无家可归。这是我在一本书上看到的。所以我不吃土豆片也是对环境保护做贡献。

我的梦想是做一个对社会有用的人。我要从现在做起，从一点一滴做起。

### Lala's Japanese fifth grade writing

#### 楽しかったわくわく遠足（五年生）

わたしは5月16日にわくわく遠足へ行きました。

行きも帰りも歩いていったので足がどんどん重たくなっていきました。

最初は、できるだけ速くゴールに行きたかったから、近道をして中東先生の所に行きました。

けれど、そこからは、どんどん道に迷ってしまいました。そこで地図を見て、また中東先生の所へもどってしまいました。でも、そこからはどんどん先生たちを見つけていき、2年生の担任の西川先生のクイズに答え終わって歩いて10mくらいのところで、一年生がころんでしまいました。足からは血が出ていました。そこでわたしは、

「おんぶしようか。」

と聞いたけど、「いやだ。」

と、言われ、わたしは、「一年生なのに強いな。」と思いました。けれどきず口から血がどんどん出ていて、あるいてもよろけるだけだったので、班長が、「やっぱりおんぶするよ。」といいました。

けれど、1年生は、されたくなかったなので、手や足をぶらんとして、おんぶができなかったので、わたしが、

「おんぶかわるよ。」

といいました。弟がいるので、おんぶをするのはなれているから、おんぶしてすぐに竹下先生の所へ行き、それから本部へもどりきず口をふせげました。

このわくわく遠足は、いろいろこまったこともあったけど、楽しかったです。